

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 CCO-00 OC-06
AID-05 FDRE-00 A-01 OPR-02 MCT-01 HA-05 SCS-06
CA-01 SY-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 /126 W
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O R 241400Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7268
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1620

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 24, 1500 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1583 (DTG 231234Z MAR 78)

1. SUMMARY: THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON CONTINUES TO HOLD,
AND THE ADF HAS FORBIDDEN THE ENTRY OF ANY FURTHER MILITARY EQUIP-
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MENT OR PERSONNEL INTO LEBANON. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE ARMY, ABOUT
1500 IRAQI VOLUNTEERS ENTERED LEBANON BEFORE THE ADF ACTION.
YASIR ARAFAT ON MARCH 23 MET WITH UNIFIL TO DISCUSS "PRELIMINARY
PROCEDURES" FOR ITS DEPLOYMENT. PRESIDENT SARKIS CRITICIZED THE
PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. FRENCH PRESIDENT GISTARD
D'ESTAING SENT SARKIS A LETTER EXPRESSING HOPE THAT THE FRENCH
FORCES SENT HERE WOULD ENCOURAGE THE LEBANESE TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL

RECONCILIATION. LAF AND IDF OFFICERS MET IN NAQURA TO DISCUSS THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO SOUTH LEBANON. THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF IRANIAN EMERGENCY AID ARRIVED. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON CONTINUES TO HOLD, ALTHOUGH PALESTINIAN FORCES ROCKETED ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE UPPER GALILEE ON MARCH 23. THE ADF ON MARCH 24 ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCING IT WOULD HENCEFORTH FORBID THE ENTRY OF ANY FURTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT OR PERSONNEL INTO LEBANON, EXCEPT THROUGH THE INTERMEDIARY OF THE GOL.

B. ONE-THIRD OF THE FRENCH UNIFIL FORCE, WHICH ARRIVED IN BEIRUT MARCH 23, MOVED TO TYRE MARCH 24. ABOUT 200 IRANIANS ASSIGNED TO UNIFIL HAVE ENTERED SOUTH LEBANON; THEY HAVE DEPLOYED TO THE QA'QA'YAT BRIDGE OVER THE LITANI AND SET UP A COMMAND POST AT GHANDURIYIH. A SMALL RECONNAISSANCE GROUP OF SWEDES IS SCHEDULED TO MOVE TO THE KHANDALI BRIDGE.

C. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER INSTANCES REPORTED OF CHRISTIAN HARASSMENT OF UNIFIL. ON MARCH 23 MAJOR HADDAD, CHRISTIAN COMMANDER OF SOUTH LEBANON, HAD STOPPED THE MAIN BODY OF IRANIANS NEAR THE "GOOD FENCE" AND HAD ALSO INTERFERED WITH IRANIANS NEAR THE KHANDALI BRIDGE. (SEE JERUSALEM 0844).

3. IRAQI VOLUNTEERS. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE ARMY, APPROXIMATELY 1500 IRAQI VOLUNTEERS ENTERED LEBANON BEFORE THE ADF ON MARCH 24 ANNOUNCED IT WOULD PERMIT NO FURTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND PER-
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SONNEL FROM ABROAD. THE IRAQIS ARE REPORTEDLY MOSTLY IN THE SIDON AREA. THE LEBANESE ARMY ESTIMATES THAT 120 LARGE TRANSPORT TRUCKS, 20 JEEPS WITH 106MM RECOILLESS RIFLES, 50 ASSORTED MILITARY VEHICLES, SOME TOWING LIGHT ARTILLERY OR 120MM MORTARS, ALSO ENTERED LEBANON FROM IRAQ.

4. ARAFAT MEETS U.N. OFFICIAL. ACCORDING TO Wafa, YASIR ARAFAT ON MARCH 23 MET WITH THE POLITICAL ADVISOR OF THE U.N. OFFICE IN BEIRUT. Wafa NOTED THAT THE TWO MEN DISCUSSED THE "PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.N. FORCES IN SOUTH LEBANON." Wafa MADE NO REFERENCE TO PLO REJECTION OF SUCH DEPLOYMENT. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE ARMY INTELLIGENCE, ARAFAT ALSO MET WITH FRENCH AND LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES TO WORK OUT DETAILS OF MOVEMENT OF FRENCH UNIFIL CONTINGENT TO TYRE.

5. SARKIS ON INTERFERENCE IN LEBANESE AFFAIRS. ON MARCH 24 PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHILE CHAIRING AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE CABINET, MADE HIS STRONGEST STATEMENT TO DATE AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. SARKIS SAID: "WE REJECT ANY INTERFERENCE IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS BY ANY STATE OR ANY PARTY, UNLESS, OF COURSE, INTERVENTION IS MADE WITH OUR AGREEMENT AND IN A WAY THAT CONFORMS TO LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY. . ."

"SARKIS ADDED THAT TO END SUCH INTERFERENCE, LEBANON WOULD USE HER OWN MEANS AS WELL AS "MEANS PUT AT HER DISPOSITION BY GENEROUS BROTHERS" (I.E. THE SYRIAN-DOMINATED ADF.)

6. LETTER FROM FRENCH PRESIDENT. ON MARCH 23 BAABDA PALACE RELEASED A LETTER FROM FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING TO PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHICH EXPRESSED THE WISH THAT THE PRESENCE OF FRENCH TROOPS HERE WOULD ENCOURAGE THE LEBANESE TO SEEK NATIONAL ACCORD AND GIVE THEM "HOPE IN THE FUTURE OF A UNITED LEBANON." THE LETTER WAS DELIVERED TO SARKIS BY FRENCH AMBASSADOR HUBERT ARGOD SHORTLY AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF FRENCH UNIFIL TROOPS IN LEBANON.

7. ISRAELI-LEBANESE TALKS. THREE LAF OFFICERS, HEADED BY LTCOL
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HANI ABBAS, COMMANDER OF SOUTHERN MILITARY REGION, MET WITH SIX IDF OFFICERS IN NAQURA ON MARCH 22 TO DISCUSS THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO SOUTH LEBANON (SEE JERUSALEM 0848). ACCORDING TO UN, MEETING WAS INCONCLUSIVE, LARGELY BECAUSE LEBANESE HAD NOT DONE THEIR HOMEWORK. LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER KHOURY, HOWEVER, TOLD DATT THAT THE LAF CONSIDERED MEETING TO HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. KHOURY SAID THAT IDF REPRESENTATIVES WERE VERY WELL PREPARED AND VERY COOPERATIVE. HE SAID THAT ISRAELI POSITION WAS THAT NO "TERRORISTS" WOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO SOUTH, BUT THAT THE IDF REPRESENTATIVES HAD NOT DEFINED "TERRORISTS." THE OFFICIAL LEBANESE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY REPORTED ON MARCH 23 THAT REFUGEES WERE RETURNING SOUTH "IN CONVOYS," BUT OUR INFORMATION INDICATES THAT NO SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE HAVE YET LEFT BEIRUT FOR SOUTH LEBANON.

8. AID TO LEBANON. IN RESPONSE TO AN INTERNATIONAL APPEAL FOR AID MADE BY THE GOL ON MARCH 22 (SEE BEIRUT 1546), THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF IRANIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ARRIVED AT BEIRUT AIRPORT ON MARCH 22. THE SHIPMENT, WHICH TOTALLED 46 TONS, INCLUDED BLANKETS AND CLOTHING. IRAN IS EXPECTED TO SEND 15 MORE TONS OF SUPPLIES. AS REPORTED BEIRUT 1583, THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF U.S. EMERGENCY AID ARRIVED THE SAME DAY.
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